

LITTLE BLUE BOOK NO. 933
Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

The Skeleton in the Closet

Clarence Darrow



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THE SKELETON IN THE CLOSET

THE SKELETON IN THE CLOSET

The closet has so long been allotted to the skeleton that we have come to regard this room as its fit and natural home; it has been given over to this guest because it is the darkest, the closest and least conspicuous in the house. The door can be securely fastened and only now and then can the grating bones be heard by the world outside. Still, however, secluded and unused this guest chamber seems to be, and however carefully we bolt the door and darken every chink and crevice in the walls, we are ever conscious that the occupant is there, and will remain until the house is closed, and the last tenant has departed, never to return. The very fact that we try so hard to keep the skeleton in its proper room, makes it the more impossible to forget that it is there. Now and then we awake with a start at the thought of what might happen should it break the door and wander through the house, and then stray out into the wide world, and tell all the peaceful, trusting neighbors from what house it stole away; and yet we are somehow

conscious that the rumor of its dread presence has already traveled as far as we are known. Man is a wonderfully adaptable animal; he fits himself easily into the environment where he is placed. He passes from infancy to childhood and from childhood to boyhood as smoothly as the placid river flows to the waiting sea. Every circumstance and surrounding of his life seems to have been made for him. Suddenly a new desire takes possession of his soul; he turns his back on the home of his childhood days and goes out alone. In a little time a new family is reared about him, and he forgets the group that clustered round his father's hearth. He may lose a leg or a fortune, and he soon conforms to his changed condition and life goes on as naturally and as easily as before. A child is born beneath his roof; it takes a place within his heart and home, and in a little while he can scarcely think of the day it was not there. Death comes, and a member of his little band is carried out, but time drops its healing balm upon the wounds and life goes on almost unconscious that the dead has ever lived. But while we adjust ourselves naturally to all things living and to ever varying scenes, the skeleton in the closet is always an intruder, no matter how long it may have dwelt beneath the roof. Even

though we may forget its actual presence for a little time, still no scene is so perfect and no enjoyment so great but we feel a cloud casting its shadow across our happiness or the weight of some burden on our soul; and when we stop to ask the cause, the grinning skeleton reminds us that it is with us even here.

This specter stands quite apart from the other sorrows of our life; age seems powerless to forget, and time will not bring its ever-fresh, recurring scenes to erase the memory of the past. This is not because the skeleton is really such a dreadful guest. The kind and loving ivy creeps tenderly around each yawning scar and crumbling stone, until the whole ruin is covered with a lovely green. The decaying pile stands free and open to the sun and rain and air. It does not hide its head or apologize for the blemishes and seams that mark its face, and a kind, forgiving nature takes the ruin, scars and all, and blends these with her softening years and lovely face into a beautiful harmonious whole; but unlike the ruin, the skeleton in the closet is a neglected, outcast child. With every breath we insist that there is nothing in the room. We refuse to take it to our hearts and homes and acknowledge it as our own. We seek to strangle it to death, and each fresh attempt not only shows our murderous design,

but proves that the skeleton is not a pulseless thing but is endowed with immortal life. The brighter the fire-light that glows around our hearth, the more desolate and drear sounds the wail of the wind outside, for through its cold blasts wanders the outcast, whose rightful place is in the brightest corner of the room.

Our constant annoyance and sorrow at this dread presence is not caused by the way the skeleton behaves to us, but from the way we treat our guest. If we looked it squarely in its grinning skull, it might not seem so very loathsome to the sight. It has the right to grin. It may be but a grim smile over the consciousness that it has sounded the last sorrow and that henceforth no greater evils are in store; it may be a mocking, sardonic grin at the thought of our discomfiture over its unwelcome presence and the knowledge that we cannot drive it out.

There is no truer index to real character than the way we treat the skeletons with which we live. Some run to the closet door, and try to lock it fast when a neighbor comes their way. If perchance any fear of discovery is felt, they stand guard outside and solemnly protest that there is nothing in the room. Their anxiety and haste plainly show fear lest their hated

guest shall reveal its face; and of course there rises in the neighbor's mind a vision of a skeleton more horrible by far than the one inside the door or than anyone can be. If the luckless jailer really fears that the rattle of the prisoner's bones has been heard outside, he feels it his duty to carefully explain or tediously cover up every detail and circumstance that caused the presence of the specter in the house. All this can only show that the guest is terrible to behold or that the jailer is so poor and weak that he himself is a helpless prisoner to his foolish pride and unmanly fear. It can only serve to emphasize the presence he tries so vainly to deny. There are also those who know that their skeleton has been seen, or who having lost all else but this persistent, grinning guest, drag it out and parade it in the world to gain the sympathy or the money of their neighbors and their friends, like the crippled beggar standing on the corner holding out his hat to every passer-by. The true man neither guiltily conceals nor anxiously explains nor vulgarly parades. He lives his life the best he can, and lets it stand for what it is. A thousand idle tales may be true or false. One may have seen but certain things, and placed him with the saints. Another little soul, who never felt the breadth and depth of human life, may have

seen his scars alone, and cast him out. But standing by his side, or clasping his strong, sympathetic hand, no one thinks of halos or scars or asks an explanation of this or that, for in his whole being is felt the divine presence of a great soul, who has lived and loved, sinned and suffered, and been strengthened and purified by all.

The skeleton is really kind that it only grins as we look it in the face. Of all our household it has received the hardest treatment at our hands. It has helped us more than any of the rest, and been locked in the closet for its pains. It may perchance have come at our own invitation bringing us the keenest, wildest joy our life had ever known. We gladly drained the pleasure to the dregs, and then coolly locked the memory close in the darkest hole that we could find. The day it came, has well nigh faded from our minds, and the mad, wild joy we knew can never more be awakened from the burned-out passions of the past, but the skeleton, which rose up grim and ghastly from the dying flame, remains to mock and jeer and make us sad. And now when the day is spent and the cup is drained, we charge the poor specter with our lasting pain, and forget the joy it brought. We look with dread at these mocking, grinning bones, which we cannot

drive away, and we forget the time, long, long ago, when those dry sticks were covered up with beautiful and tempting flesh.

It may be that we shall always shudder as we hear the rattle of the bones when we pass the closet door, but in justice to the inmate, we should give him credit for the joys of long ago. And this brings us back to the old question of the balancing of pain and pleasure, good and evil, right and wrong. It may be that in the mysterious adjustment of nature's balances, a moment of supreme bliss will outweigh an eternity of pain. In the infinite economy, which life counted for the more,—that of Napoleon, or the poor French peasant that passed through an obscure existence to an unknown grave? The brief glory of Austerlitz was followed by the bitterness of Waterloo, and the long silence of an exile's life, while the peasant trod his short path without ambition, and filled a nameless grave without regret. Which is the greater and finer, the blameless life of the patient brute, or the winding, devious path of a human soul? It is only the dull level that brings no sorrow or regret. It is a sterile soil where no weeds will grow, and a bare closet where no skeleton will dwell.

Neither should we remember the skeleton

only for the joy it brought; from the day it came, it has been the greatest benefactor that our life has known. When the mad delirium had passed away, and the last lingering fragrance was almost spent, this despised skeleton remained as the sole companion, whose presence should forever bind us back to those feelings that were fresh and true and straight from nature's heart, and that world which once was green and young and filled with pulsing life. As the shadows gather round our head, and our once-straying feet fall mechanically into the narrow path so straight and even at the farther end, we may shudder now and then at the thought of the grim skeleton whose life is so far removed from our sober later selves; but with the shudder comes a spark, a flash of that great, natural light and heat that once possessed this tottering frame, and gave a glow of feeling and a strength of purpose so deep and all-controlling that the artificial life of an artificial world seems no more than a dim candle shining by the glorious sun.

It is the exhausted emotions of age, which men call prudence, that are ever warning youth of the follies of its sins. It is the grinning skeleton, speaking truly from the memory of other days, that insists that life's morning held the halcyon hours. Does old age outlive the

follies of childhood or does the man outgrow the wisdom of youth? The most vociferous preachers are often those whose natural spirits have led them to drink the deepest of life. They are so foolish as to think that others can be taught by their experiences, and mumbling grey-beards endorse the excellence and wisdom of the sermons they preach. They are not wise enough to know that their prattle is more vain and foolish than the babblings of their childhood days. It was the growing, vital sap of life that made them children years ago; it is the icy, palsyng touch of age that makes them babbling, preaching children once again. As well might the calm and placid lake teach the beauty of repose to the boiling, seething cataract, that thunders down Niagara's gulf. When the troubled waters shall have reached the lake they shall be placid too. Nature is wiser far than man. She makes the first childhood precede the second. If the age of prudence came with youth, it would be a dull and prosy world for a little time; then life would be extinct upon the earth and death triumphant over all.

But these are the smallest reasons why we should venerate the neglected skeleton, which we have ruthlessly cast into the closet as if it were a hideous thing. This uncanny skele-

ton, ever thrusting its unwelcome bones into our presence and our lives, has been the most patient, persistent, constant teacher that all our years have known. We look backward through the long dim vista of the past, back to the little trusting child that once nestled on its mother's breast and from whose loving lips and gentle soul it first was a benediction to the life that was once a portion of herself. We remember still this mother's words teaching us the way to live and telling us the way to die. We always knew that no selfish thought inspired a single word she said and yet time and time again we strayed and wandered from the path she pointed out. We could not keep the road and after while we did not try. Again our teacher told us of the path. He, too, was good and kind and knew the way we ought to go, and showed us all the bad results of sin, and still we stumbled on. The preacher came and told us of the beauteous heaven, straight at the other end of the narrow path, and the yawning gulf of hell to which our shifting footsteps led; but we heeded not his solemn tones, though they seemed to come with the authority of God himself. As the years went on, our mother's voice was stilled, the teacher's words were hushed, the preacher's threats became an empty, hollow sound; and in their place came

the grinning skeleton, born of our own desires and deeds; less loving than the gentle mother, more real and life-like than the teacher, saner and truer than the preacher's idle words. It was ever present and persistent; it was a portion of our very selves.

We detested and feared the hated thing; we locked it in the closet, and denied that it was there; but through the brightness of the day and the long and silent watches of the night, we heard its rattling bones, and felt its presence at our side. No teacher of our youth was like that grim and ghastly skeleton, which we tried to hide away. The schoolmaster of our early life took our fresh, young, plastic minds and sought to crowd them full of useless, unrelated facts that served no purpose through the years that were to come. These lessons that our teacher made us learn by rote filled so small a portion of our daily lives that most of them were forgotten when the school-house door was closed. When now and then we found some use for a trifling thing that we had learned through years at school, we were surprised to know that the pedagogue had taught us even this. In those early days it seemed to us that life would consist of one long examination in which we should be asked the names of states, the rule of three, and the words the

Romans used for this and that. All that we were taught of the great world outside and the problem that would one day try our souls, was learned from the copy books where we wrote the same old maxim until all the paper was used up. In after years, we learned that, while the copy book might have taught us how to write in a stilted, unused hand, still all its maxims were untrue.

We left school as ignorant of life as we commenced, nay, we might more easily have learned its lesson without the false, misleading theories we were taught were true. When the doors were opened and the wide world met us face to face, we tested what we learned, and found it false, and then we blundered on alone. We were taught by life that the fire and vigor of our younger years could not be governed by the platitudes of age. Nature was ever present with her strong and earthly grasp, her keen desires, her white hot flame. We learned the precepts of the books, but we lived the life that nature taught.

Our pathetic blunders and mistakes, and the skeleton that followed in their wake, remained to teach us what was false and point to what was true. This grim, persistent teacher made but little of the unimportant facts that the

schoolmaster sought to make us learn, and it laughed to scorn the preacher's doctrine, that in some way we could avoid the results of our mistakes and sins. It did not preach, it took its place beside us as another self and by its presence sought to make us know that we could not be at peace until we clasped it to our breast and freely accepted the unwelcome thing as a portion of our lives.

Only the smallest fraction that we learned in youth was assimilated and made a portion of ourselves; the rest faded so completely that it seemed never to have been. The teacher soon became a dim, uncertain memory of the past, whose voice had long since died away; but the skeleton in the closet never wearied nor grew old. It ever made us learn again the lesson we would fain forget; opened at each succeeding period of our lives the pages we would gladly put away, until, at last, the ripening touch of time and the specter's constant presence made us know. From the day it came beneath our roof, it remained the liveliest, wisest, most persistent member of the family group, the tireless, watchful teacher, who would neither sleep nor allow its pupil to forget.

It may be that there are lives so barren and

uneventful that this guest passes ever by their door, but unfortunate indeed is that abode where it will not dwell. The wide vistas can be seen only from the mountain top, and the infinite depths of life can be sounded only by the soul that has been softened and hallowed by the sanctifying touch of misery and sin.

Life is a never-ending school, and the really important lessons all tend to teach man his proper relation to the environment where he must live. With wild ambitions and desires untamed, we are spawned out into a shoreless sea of moving molecules of life, each separate atom journeying on an unknown course, regardless of the countless other lives it meets as it blindly rushes on; no lights nor headlands stand to point the proper way the voyager should take, he is left to sail an untried bar across an angry sea. If no disaster should befall, it does not show that the traveler is wise or good, but that his ambitions and desires are few or he has kept close inside the harbor line. At first we seek to swim the flood, to scale the rocky heights, to clutch the twinkling stars. Of course we fail and fall, and the scars our passions and ambitions leave, remain, though all our particles are made anew year after year. We learn at last to leave the

stars to shine where they belong, to take all things as they are and adjust our lives to what must be.

The philosophy of life can come only from those experiences that leave lasting scars and results that will not die. Rather than seek to cover up these gaping wounds, we should accept with grace the tales they tell, and show them as trophies of the strife we have passed through. Those scars are honorable that have brought our lives into greater harmony with the universal power. For resist it as we will, this infinite, loving presence will ever claim us as a portion of its self until our smallest fragments return once more to earth, and are united with the elements from which we came.

No life can be rounded and complete without the education that the skeleton alone can give. Until it came we never knew the capacities of the human soul. We had learned by rote to be forgiving, kind and true. But the anguish of the human soul cannot be told—it must be felt or never known. The charity born of true comradeship, which is the highest and holiest sentiment of life, can be taught by the skeleton alone. The self-righteous, who prate of forgiveness to their fellow men and who look down upon their sinning brothers from

above, are hypocrites or fools. They either have not lived or else desire to pass for something they are not. No one can understand the devious, miry paths trodden by another soul unless he himself has wandered through the night.

Those placid, human lives that have moved along a narrow, even path; that learned by rote the lessons that the churches and the schools have ever taught; whose perfection consists in refraining from doing certain things in certain ways; who never had a noble thought or felt a great desire to help their fellow men—those blameless, aimless, worthless souls, are neither good nor bad. They neither feel nor think; no skeleton would deem it worth its while to come inside their door.

The world judges the conduct of youth by the standards of age. Even when due allowance is made for the inexperience and haste of the young, it is assumed that youth and age are measured by the calendar alone. Few have ever been wise enough to know that every passion and circumstance must be fully weighed, before an honest verdict can be written down; and that therefore only the infinite can judge a human soul.

Though accursed, doubted, and despised, Na-

ture ever persists in her relentless plan. She would make us learn the lessons that youth so easily forgets. She finds us headstrong, unreasoning, and moved by the same feelings that sway the brute. She decrees that every act, however blind or wilful, must leave its consequences on our lives, and these immortal consequences we treat as skeletons and lock them up. But these uncanny specters wrap us closely in their bony arms; they ever peer with sightless eyes into our soul; they are with us if we sleep or wake, and their persistent presence will not let us sleep. It is the hated, imprisoned skeleton that we vainly sought to hide away, that takes an untamed, fiery soul within its cruel, loving clasp, and holds it closely in its unforgiving grasp until the vain longings and wild desires of youth are subdued, and cooled, and the deeper harmonies of life are learned. It is the hated skeleton that finds within our breast a heart of flint and takes this hard and pulseless thing and scars and twists and melts it in a thousand tortuous ways until the stony mass is purged and softened and is sensitive to every touch.

It is this same despised skeleton that finds us vain and boastful and critical of other's sins, that watches every word we speak and even each unuttered thought; it is with us

when we tightly draw our robes and pass our fellow on the other side; it hears us when we seek to show how good we are by boasting of our neighbor's sins; for every spot of black or red that we see upon another's robes, it points its bony fingers to a scar upon our heart, to remind us that we are like the rest; and the same finger ever points us to our wounds until we feel and understand that the clay the Master used for us was as weak and poor as that from which he made the rest.

However blind and stubborn we may be, however long we deny the lesson that the skeleton would teach, still it will not let us go until with perfect peace and harmony we look at all the present and the past, at all that was, and all that is, and feel no regrets for what is gone, and no fears for what must come. It may be that our stubborn, stiff-necked soul will still persist until the hair is white and the heavy shadows hang about our heads, but the skeleton with his soothing, softening ally, time, sits with the last watchers at our suffering bed, and goes if need be, to the silent grave, where alike the darkest crimson spot and the softest, purest clay are reunited once again with the loving, universal mother who has forgiven all and conquered all. It matters not how high we seem to climb, or what the care-

less world may think for good or ill. It matters not how many small ambitions we may seem to have achieved. Even the unworthy cannot be forever soothed by the hollow voice of fame. All triumphs are futile without the victory over self; and when the triumph over self is won, there are no more battles to be fought, for all the world is then at peace. It is the skeleton in the closet pointing ever to the mistakes and maladjustments of our past, the skeleton standing there before our gazes that makes us still remember where our lives fell short; that teaches us so slowly but so surely to turn from the unworthy victories and the dire defeats of life to the mastery of ourselves. It is the skeleton from whom we learn that we can live without the world, but not without ourselves.

Without the skeleton we could never feel another's sorrow, or know another's pain. Philosophy and theology cannot tell us how another's life became a hopeless wreck. It is ourselves alone that reveals the precipice along which every footpath leads. It is from life we learn that it is but an accident when we fall, and equally an accident when we keep the path. The pupil of the schools may look down with pitying glance upon the unfortunate victim of what seems to be his sin. He may point

to a love that will forgive and kindly plead with him to take another path, but the wayfarer that the skeleton has taught will clasp this fellow mortal to his heart, for in his face he sees but the reflection of himself. The wise and good may forgive the evil and the wrong, but only the sinner knows that there is no sin.

The charity that is born of life and sin is not fine because of its effect on someone else, but for what it does for us. True charity is only the sense of the kinship of all living things. This is the charity that neither humiliates nor offends. It is the sense that brings a new meaning to life and a new purpose to the soul.

Let us do simple justice to this neglected, outcast guest, the useful, faithful teacher of our lives. Let us open the closet door, and let the skeleton come out, and lock the schoolmaster in its place. Let us leave this faithful friend to roam freely at its will. Let us look it squarely in the face with neither fear or shame, but with gratitude for the lessons it has taught. It may be that the jeering crowd will point in scorn as they see us with the grewsome figure at our side, but when we fully learn the lesson that it came to teach, we shall need to look no more without for the ap-

proval or disapproval of our acts, but seek to satisfy ourselves alone. Let us place a new chair beside the hearth, in the cosiest nook, and bid the skeleton take its place as the worthiest guest. Let us neither parade nor hide our new-found friend, but treat it as a fact of life—a fact that is, a fact that had the right to be, and a fact that taught us how to find ourselves. Let us not forget the parents, who watch us in your youth, and the friend that were ever good and true. But above all, let us remember this grim and silent teacher, who never neglected or forgot, who showed us life as only it could show, who opened up new vistas to our soul, who touched our human hearts, who made us know and loved our fellowman, who softened and mellowed and purified our souls until we felt the kinship that we bore to all living things. Until it came we knew only the surface of the world. Before it came, we had tasted of the shallow cup of joy and the bitter cup of pain, but we needed this to teach us from the anguish of the soul that there is a depth profound and great, where pain and pleasure both are one. That there is a life so deep and true that earth's rewards and penalties alike are but a hollow show; that there is a conquest of ourselves, which brings perfect peace and perfect rest.

WALT WHITMAN

The work of Whitman stands alone in the literature of the world. Both in substance and construction he ignored all precedents and dared to be himself. All the rules of form and taste must be unlearned before the world can accept his style as true literary art. Still it may be that Walt Whitman was a poet, and that sometime the world will look back and marvel at the mechanical precision and glittering polish that confines and emasculates for the sake of a purely artificial form.

Measured by the common rules, Whitman's work is neither poetry nor prose; it is remotely allied to the wild chanting of the primitive bards, who looked about at the fresh new marvels of earth and sky and sea, and unhampered by form and rules and customs, sang of the miracles of the universe and the mysteries of life. Whitman seems one of those old bards, fresh from the hand of nature, young with the first creation, the newest handwork of the great Master, untaught in any schools, unfettered by any of the myriad chords, which time is ever weaving about the brains and hearts and consciences of men as the world grows gray; a

primitive bard of nature, born by some chance or accident in this old, tired, worn-out world, dropped into this Nineteenth century with its machines and conventions, its artificial life, its unnatural morals and its fettered limbs. He alone in all the ages seems to have been specially given to the world, still fresh with the imprint of the Creator's hand, and standing amid all our false conventions, natural, simple, true, "naked and not ashamed." To the world with its crowded cities, its diseased bodies, its unnatural desires, its narrow religion, and its false morals, he comes like a breeze of the morning, from the mountains or the sea. Aye, like a breath of that great, creative life, which touched the fresh world and brought forth the green grass, the sparkling waters and the growing, beauteous, natural earth.

No one ever fell in love with Whitman's work for its literary art, but his work must live or die because of his philosophy of life and the material he chose from which to weave his songs. It is in his whole point of view that Walt Whitman stands so much alone. No one else has ever looked on the universe and life as this man did. If religion means devotion to that great unseen power that is ever manifest in all of nature's works, then Walt Whitman was the most reverent soul that ever lived. This

man alone of all the world dared defend the Creator in every part and parcel of his work. The high mountains, the deep valleys, the broad plains and the wide seas; the feelings, the desires, and the passions of man; all forms of life and being that exist upon the earth, were to him but several manifestations of a great creative power that formed them all alike, made each one needful to the whole, and every portion sacred through its Master's stamp.

And I will show that there is no imperfection in the present and can be none in the future,
And I will show that whatever happens to anybody it may be turn'd to beautiful results,
And I will show that nothing can happen more beautiful than death.

And I will thread a thread through my poems that time and events are compact,
And that all the things of the universe are perfect miracles, each as profound as any.
I will not make poems with reference to parts.
But I will make poems, songs, thoughts, with reference to ensemble,
And I will not sing with reference to a day, but with reference to all days.

Whitman's philosophy knew no evil and no wrong. The fact of existence proved the right of existence; in the great workshop of nature every tool had its special use and its rightful place.

The imperfections of the world come from the narrow visions of men. If the perspective is right, the universe is right. From the narrow

valley the house may look old and worn, the fences decayed, the fields barren, the woods scraggy and the cliff ragged and bare; but climb to the only place where either life or landscape can be rightly seen, the mountain top, and look once more. The hills, the valley, the stream, the woods, and the farms have melted and blended into one harmonious whole, and every imperfection has been swept away. The universe is filled with myriad worlds as important as our own, each one a tiny floating speck in an endless sea of space—each whirling, turning, moving on and on and on, through the countless ages, past and yet to come. No one can tell the purpose of their tireless, endless flight through space; but still we know that each has an orbit of its own, and every world is related to the rest, and every grain of sand and the weakest, feeblest spark of power has its needful place in the balance of the whole. So all of good, and all of bad, and all of life, and all of death, and all of all, has the right to be and must needs be. Walt Whitman did not even know how to divide the evil from the good, but he sang them both alike.

I am not the poet of goodness only, I do not decline to be the poet of wickedness also.
What blurt is this about virtue and about vice?
Evil propels me and reform of evil propels me, I stand indifferent.

The universe can make no mistakes, every particle of energy that has permeated the world since time began, has been working toward a completer* system and a more harmonious whole. There is a soul of truth in error; there is a soul of good in evil. From the trials and sorrows and disappointments of life, even from its bitterness and doubt and sin, are often born the holiest desires, the sincerest endeavors and the most righteous deeds.

Sometimes with one I love I fill myself with rage
 for fear I effuse unreturn'd love,
 But now I think there is no unreturn'd love, the
 pay is certain one way or another,
 (I loved a certain person ardently and my love
 was not return'd,
 Yet out of that I have written these songs.)

This is the old, old philosophy, ever forgotten, yet ever present. It is sure in the world of mechanics, it is equally true in the world of morals and of life. Nothing is lost; the force that once was heat is transformed to light; the flood that destroyed the grain, comes at last to turn the miller's wheel. What we call sin and evil make the experiences of life and go to the upbuilding of character and the development of man. We can know only what we have felt, and however much we try to deceive others, we can tell only of the experiences we ourselves have had. The poorest life is the one that has no tale to tell. In the

doubts and darkness of life, in the turbulence of mind and the anguish of the soul, it is most consoling to feel that resignation and confidence which comes from a realization that all is right and that you are master of yourself and at peace with God and man. This calm, optimistic, self-reliant philosophy is ever present with its consoling power in all Walt Whitman's work.

I have said that the soul is not more than the body,
And I have said that the body is not more than the
soul,
And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's
self is,
And whoever walks a furlong without sympathy
walks to his own funeral drest in his shroud,

And I or you pocketless of a dime may purchase
the pick of the earth,
And to glance with an eye or show a bean in its
pod confounds the learning of all times,
And there is no object so soft but it makes a hub
for the wheel'd universe,
And I say to many man or woman, Let your soul
stand cool and composed before a million uni-
verses.

And I say to mankind, Be not curious about God,
For I who am curious about each, am not curious
about God,
(No array of terms can say how much I am at
peace about God and about death.)

I hear and behold God in every object, yet under-
stand God not in the least,
Ner do I understand who there can be more won-
derful than myself.

Why should I wish to see God better than this day?
I see something of God each hour of the twenty-
four and each moment then,

In the faces of men and women I see God, and in
 my own face in the glass,
 I find letters from God dropt in the street, and
 every one is sign'd by God's name,
 And I leave them where they are, for I know that
 wheresoe'er I go,
 Others will punctually come for ever and ever.

This is not the boasting of the ignorant
 egotist who vaunts himself above his fellow
 man, but the calm, conscious serenity of a
 great soul, who has learned the patient phi-
 losophy of life.

There is an egotism that is cheap and vul-
 gar and born of ignorance alone. There is an
 egotism that comes from the knowledge that
 after all what we are depends not upon the
 estimate of the world, but upon the integrity
 and character of ourselves. This consciousness
 of individual worth brings that peace of soul,
 "which the world can neither give nor take
 away."

I know I am august,
 I do not trouble my spirit to vindicate itself or be
 understood,
 I see that the elementary laws never apologize,
 (I reckon I behave no prouder than the level I
 plant my house by, after all),
 I exist as I am, that is enough,
 If no other in the world be aware I sit content.

One world is aware and by far the largest to me,
 and that is myself;
 And whether I come to my own today or in ten
 thousand or ten million years,
 I can cheerfully take it now, or with equal cheer-
 fulness I can wait.

My foothold is tennon'd and mortis'd in granite,
I laugh at what you call dissolution,
And I know the amplitude of time.

Happy is the man that has climbed to the height on which Walt Whitman stood. Happy is he that has mastered the haste and impatience of youth, and is content to bide his time. Happy is he that has so far solved the problem of life as to know that reward is not received from others and cannot be withheld by others, but can be given only by ourselves. Such a man has struck the subtle harmony which unites his soul with the universal life and he knows that no one but himself can cut the cord.

To a great mass of men and women, Walt Whitman is known almost alone by that portion of his work called "Children of Adam." These poems have called forth the fiercest opposition and the bitterest denunciation, and if the common judgment is correct, they are obscene and vile. While this portion of his book is by far the smallest part, still, before the court of public opinion, he must stand or fall upon these lines. In one sense public opinion is right, for unless these stanzas can be defended, his point of view is wrong, and Walt Whitman's work will die. We need not accept all he did, or give unstinted praise to all his work, but his thought, and his point of

view will determine the place he shall fill in art and life.

It is in this work that the courage and personality of Whitman towers so high above every other man that ever wrote. It is easy for the essayist to speak in general terms and glittering phrases in defense of Whitman's work. His defenders have been many, but he alone has had the courage to speak.

It is not difficult to insist that his "A Woman Waits for Me" is a tremendous work, and as pure as nature's generating power. Still perhaps few would dare to read it aloud in an assembly of men and women. If Whitman is right, the world is wrong. This poem, and others of its like, in plain words deals of the deepest, strongest, most persistent feelings that move the sentient world. In proportion as they are deeper and stronger than any other, they should the more be the subject of thought and art. And still ages of established convention have made the world pretend ignorance until no one dares defend his right to life but this brave and simple man.

In both England and America, narrow interpretations of morality have almost stifled art. As remarked by a leading novelist—"All our literature is addressed to the young school girl." If it will not pass muster before her

eyes, it has no right to live, and almost no English or American author has been great enough to rise above these narrow conventions and write the natural and true. The artists of continental Europe have been less fettered and have taken us over a broader range and a wider field. Still while these authors have told more of life, they have treated these tremendous subjects by drawing the curtain only a little way aside, and giving us a curious, perverted, half stolen look, as if they knew that the picture was unholy and therefore tempting to the gaze. But Walt Whitman approached the human body and the mysteries of life from an entirely different view.

If any thing is sacred, the human body is sacred,
And the glory and sweet of man is the token of
manhood untainted,
And in man or woman a clean, strong, firm-fibred
body, is more beautiful than the most beautiful
face.

If Walt Whitman could have drawn the veil from the universe and shown us the living God in all his majesty and power, he would have approached his throne with no greater reverence than when he stripped the human body and pointed to its every part fresh and sacred from its Maker's hand.

No true system of life and morals will exist until the holiest feelings and most potent and

eternal power is openly recognized and discussed with neither jest nor shame.

Walt Whitman was the great bard of democracy and equality; not simply the vulgar democracy of political rights and promiscuous familiarity, but the deep, broad, fundamental democracy that looks at all of nature and feels the unity and kinship that makes the universe a whole.

To Walt Whitman there could be no thought of class or caste. Each one held his certificate of birth from the same infinite power that, through all the ages and all the false and criminal distinctions of man, has yet decreed that all shall enter helpless and naked through the same gateway of birth, and each alike must go back to the fundamental mother, shorn of every distinction that man in his vain-glorious pride has sought to make. Whitman placed the works of nature above the works of man. He had no faith in those laws and institutions which the world has ever made to defraud, and enslave, and deny the common brotherhood of all. He believed that every child that came upon the earth was legitimate, and had an equal right to land, and sea, and air, and all that nature made, and all that nature gave.

Each of us is inevitable,
Each of us limitless—each of us with his or her
right upon the earth,
Each of us allow'd the eternal purports of the earth,
Each of us here as divinely as any is here.

Let this stanza speak to our conscience face to face—is it true or false? Can any but a blasphemer deny the divine right of every man upon the earth? And yet if this simple stanza is true, every law book should be burned and every court abolished and natural justice, unfettered and undenied, should be enthroned above the forms and conventions and laws, which, each and all, deny the integrity of the soul and the equal rights of man.

Through all the injustice and inequality of the world, the vision of democracy has still prevailed and ever must prevail as long as nature brings forth and takes back the master and the slave alike. But the aspiration for democracy is not always high and noble. It is easy to demand for ourselves the same rights enjoyed by our fellow men, but Whitman's democracy was on a higher plane.

I speak the pass-word primeval, I give the sign of
democracies,
By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot
have their counterpart of on the same terms.

These lines breathe the spirit of true humanity, the spirit that will one day remove all barriers and restrictions, and liberate the high

and low alike. For nothing is truer in life or more inevitable in the economy of nature than this sage thought:

Whatever degrades another degrades me,
And whatever is done or said returns at last to me.

It is a sad mistake to believe that injustice and wrong can injure only the poor and the weak. Every mean word and narrow thought and selfish act degrades the aggressor, leaves its mark upon his soul and its penalty in his life. So, too, no good effort is really lost, however it may seem to be. The kind word may be spoken to the deaf, the righteous effort be wrongly directed, the alms unworthily bestowed, but the heart that feels and the soul that tries has grown greater by the act.

The song is to the singer, and comes back most to
him,
The teaching is to the teacher, and comes back most
to him,
The murder is to the murderer, and comes back
most to him,
The theft is to the thief, and comes back most to
him,
The love is to the lover, and comes back most to
him,
The gift is to the giver, and comes back most to
him,—it cannot fail,
The oration is to the orator, the acting is to the
actor and actress, not to the audience,
And no man understands any greatness or goodness
but his own, or the indication of his own.

Not alone in his theory of personal equality was Walt Whitman a democrat in the highest

meaning of the term, but he distrusted the ease and effeminacy of modern life; he doubted and feared the polish and super-sensitiveness that precedes decay; he had no faith in hot-house plants, in pampered life, in luxury and repose. He believed in rugged, primeval nature, in the rocks and hills, the rivers and the pines; he loved the dumb and patient brute, and believed in stalwart men and strong women; in sunlight, rain and air.

I am enamour'd of growing out of doors,
Of men that live among cattle or taste of the ocean
 or woods,
Of the builders and steerers of ships and the wield-
 ers of axes and mauls, and the drivers of
 horses,
I can eat and sleep with them week in and week
 out.
I think I could turn and live with animals, they are
 so placid and self-contain'd,
I stand and look at them and long and long.

They do not sweat and whine about their condition,
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for
 their sins,
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to
 God,
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with
 the mania of owning things,
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived
 thousands of years ago,
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole
 earth.

Walt Whitman's work is not of the old, time-worn sort. When he speaks of love it is the love of life, the love of reality, the strong love of men, the intense love of women, the honest

love that nature made, the love that is; not the unhealthy, immoral, false, impossible love told in erotic prose and more erotic verse, and given to young girls and boys as the truth, to poison and corrupt with its false and vicious views of life.

But he sings of the common things, the democracy of every day; for it is the small affairs that make up life, and its true philosophy is to see the beauty and greatness and relation of these little things and not to pine for the seemingly momentous events, which can rarely come. The Alexanders, the Cæsars and the Napoleons are scattered only here and there in the great sea of human existenee, and yet every life measured by just standards may be as great as these; and the soul that is conscious of its own integrity knows its own worth regardless of the world.

I do not call one greater and one smaller,
That which fills its period and place is equal to any.

Walt Whitman felt the music of the hammer and the axe as he felt the harmony of the symphonies of Beethoven, and he understood the art of the plow-boy in the field as well as the glorious creations of Millet.

The young mechanic is closest to me, he knows me
well,
The woodman that takes his axe and jug with him

shall take me with him all day,
The farm-boy plowing in the field feeds good at
the sound of my voice,
In vessels that sail my words sail, I go with fish-
ermen and seamen and love them.

The soldier camp'd or upon the march is mine,
On the night ere the pending battle may seek me,
and I do not fail them,
On that solemn night (it may be their last) those
that know me seek me,
My face rubs to the hunter's face when he lies
down alone in his blanket,
The driver thinking of me does not mind the jolt
of his wagon,
The young mother and old mother comprehend me,
The girl and the wife rest the needle a moment
and forget where they are,
They and all would resume what I have told them.

Walt Whitman's democracy did not end with sex. Man is not always a logical animal. Most of the practical democracy of the world has stopped with men, and generally with white men at that. The political equality of woman has only barely been considered; the still more important question, her economic independence, is yet a far-off dream. But Walt Whitman knew no limit to equality. With him equality meant equality. It could mean nothing else.

I am the poet of the woman the same as the man,
And I say it is as great to be a woman as to be a
man,
And I say there is nothing greater than the mother
of men.

Probably Walt Whitman would not have raised his hat to a woman on the street, nor

given her his seat in the car, simply because she was a woman. Both these may be well enough, but they grow from false ideas of women and of course through these false ideas women lose the most. Injustice and oppression can never be made up by chivalry and pretended courtesy. And the evil always is and must be the false relation which these create. Men expect to pay women for their political and economic freedom in theater tickets and by taking off their hats in public, and in the end women become willing to receive this paltry and debasing bribe.

"The Open Road," one of Whitman's masterpieces, is full of wholesome inclusive democracy.

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,
 Healthy, free, the world before me,
 The long brown path before me leading wherever
 I choose.

Henceforth I ask not good fortune, I myself am
 good fortune,
 Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more,
 need nothing
 Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous
 criticisms,
 Strong and content I travel the open road.

The earth, that is sufficient,
 I do not want the constellations any nearer,
 I know they are very well where they are,
 I know they suffice for those who belong to them.

Here the profound lessons of reception, nor preference nor denial,

The black with his woolly head, the felon, the dis-
eas'd, the illiterate person, are not denied;
The birth, the hasting after the physician, the beg-
gar's tramp, the drunkard's stagger, the laugh-
ing party of mechanics,
The escaped youth, the rich person's carriage, the
fop, the eloping couple,
The early market men, the hearse, the moving of
furniture into the town, the return back from
the town,
They pass, I also pass, anything passes, none can
be interdicted,
None but are accepted, none but shall be dear to
me.

But Walt Whitman's democracy was more inclusive still. It is almost becoming the fad to forgive the evil in others and to insist that, after all, their good qualities give them the right to kinship with ourselves, but this is only one side of true democracy. The felon is my brother, not alone because he has every element of good that I so well recognize in myself, but because I have every element of evil that I see in him. Walt Whitman was wise enough to see the feelings and passions that make others sin, and he was just enough and great enough to recognize all these feelings in himself.

You felons on trial in courts,
You convicts in prison-cells, you sentenced assassins
chain'd and handcuff'd with iron,
Who am I too that I am not on trial or in prison?
Me, ruthless and devilish as any, that my wrists are
not chain'd with iron, or my ankles with iron?
You prostitutes flaunting over the pavements or
obscene in your rooms,

Who am I that I should call you more obscene than myself?

O culpable! I acknowledge—I expose!

(O admirers, praise not me—compliment not me—
you make me wince,

I see what you do not—I know what you do not.)
Inside these breast-bones I lie smutch'd and choked,
Beneath this face that appears so impassive hell's
tides continually run,

Lusts and wickedness are acceptable to me,

I walk with delinquents with passionate love,

I feel I am of them—I belong to those convicts
and prostitutes myself,

And henceforth I will not deny them—for how can
I deny myself?

These lines are not a burst of poetic feeling, they are the sincere utterances of a brave philosopher and poet, who tells the truth about himself and about you and me. Let us be honest about sin. How do you and I differ from the murderer on the gallows, the prostitute in the street or the burglar in the jail? How wide a breach is there between coveting the house or home or seal skin coat of your neighbor and taking it if you can? How great a difference between making a sharp trade with your neighbor, getting more from him than you give to him, and taking outright what he has? Yet one is business, the other larceny. What is the distance between hating your neighbor, and wishing him dead: how great a chasm between feeling relief at his death, and killing him yourself? So far as the man is concerned, it is not the act that is evil, but the heart that is

evil. There is no difference between the committed and the uncommitted crime. Every feeling that makes every sort of crime is in the heart of each and every one. Nature has made the blood of some of us a little cooler, and has developed caution a little more, or fate has made the temptation a trifle less, and thus we have escaped,—that is, managed to conceal the real passion that boils and surges in our hearts. Until this is dead, evil is in our souls. Away with all this talk of superiority and differences. It is cant—pure, simple cant.

I will play a part no longer, why should I exile
myself from my companions?
O you shunn'd persons, I at least do not shun you,
I come forthwith in your midst, I will be your poet,
I will be more to you than to any of the rest.

Has man the right to be less kind than nature is? Have we the right by word or deed to pass judgment on our fellow man? Can we not learn of love and charity and hope from the sun, the rain, the generous earth, and the pulsing, growing spring? Hear Walt Whitman's word to a common prostitute:

Be composed—be at ease with me—I am Walt
Whitman, liberal and lusty as Nature,
Not till the sun excludes you do I exclude you,
Not till the waters refuse to glisten for you and the
leaves to rustle for you do my words refuse to
glisten and rustle for you.

Neither was it the magnanimous soul of

Whitman that was charitable and kind, but it was the truthful, honest man who saw his own goodness in the woman; and her sin, which after all was only an excess of kindness, in himself.

The regenerated world will be built upon the democracy Walt Whitman taught. It will know neither rich nor poor; neither high nor low; neither good nor bad; neither right nor wrong; but

I will establish * * * in every city of these states
 inland and seaboard,
 In the fields and woods, and above every keel,
 little or large, that dents the water,
 Without edifices or rules or trustees or any argu-
 ment,
 The institution of the dear love of comrades.

Walt Whitman was always and at all times an optimist. He never struck a despairing note or voiced a doubting strain. His hope was not anchored in blind faith or narrow creed. His optimism was not that of the cowardly fanatic who stubbornly shuts his eyes to avoid an unpleasant view. He looked abroad at all the world and called it good.

Optimism and pessimism in their last analysis are questions of temperament. They depend upon the eye that looks out, not upon the object that it sees. The pessimist points to the sunset, casting its lengthening shadows on the earth, and tells of the night that is coming on;

the optimist shows us the rosy dawn, the golden promise of a glorious day. The pessimist tells of winter, whose icy breath chills and deadens all the world; the optimist points to springtime with its ever recurring miracle of light and life. Is the pessimist right or is the optimist right—does the night precede the day, or the day precede the night? After all, are our calendars wrong—does the winter with its white shroud and cold face mark the ending of the year, or does the springtime with its budding life and its resurrecting power awaken the dead earth to joyous, pulsing life again?

Above the view of the optimist, who sees the morning and the spring, and the pessimist, who sees the evening and the closing year, stand a few serene souls, who look on both with clear eye and tranquil mind, and declare that all is good. The morning is right and the evening is right. It is beautiful to pass through the joyous gates of birth; it is good to be clasped in the peaceful arms of death. Rare Walt Whitman at thirty-seven, full of health and vigor and strength, with the world before him, and conscious of his genius and his power, sings in a burst of optimism:

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs
to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,
I lean and loafe at my ease, observing a spear of
summer grass.

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from
this soil, this air,
Born of parents born here from parents the same,
and their parents the same,
I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health
begin,
Hoping to cease not till death.

Again at seventy, looking back on a life well
spent, conscious that the last few sands are
running out, a confirmed invalid with palsied
limbs and failing strength, looking death
squarely in the face and just before him; with
the same sweet smile, the same lovely nature,
the same all-embracing philosophy, sings once
again his optimistic song:

Not from successful love alone,
Nor wealth, nor honor'd middle age, nor victories
of politics or war;
But as life wanes, and all the turbulent passions
calm,
As gorgeous, vapory, silent hues cover the eve-
ning sky,
As softness, fulness, rest, suffuse the frame, like
fresher, balmier air,
As the days take on a mellow light, and the apple
at last hangs really finish'd and indolent-ripe
on the tree,
Then for the teeming, quietest, happiest days of all!
The brooding, blistful halcyon days!

It must be that somewhere is a serene height
where life triumphs over death. It must be that
nature does not jar, and that the close of a
lovely life is really as peaceful and as beautiful

as the decline of a perfect day; that each day rightly lived and every year well spent, must bring the pilgrim more in harmony with his journey drawing to a close.

The world has ever shuddered at death—has stubbornly closed its eyes and refused to look in its face, to take its hand, to think of its peaceful, forgiving, soothing touch, has ever called it enemy and never thought to caress it as a friend. Walt Whitman was wiser than the rest. His philosophy made him know that death was equally good, whether the opening gateway to a freer, fuller life, or a restful couch for a weary soul.

Whitman had solved the eternal riddle; he had conquered death; he looked at her pale form and saluted her as he would welcome a new birth. No bard ever sang a more glorious hymn than Walt Whitman sang to death.

Come, lovely and soothing Death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriv-
ing,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later, delicate Death,
Praised by the fathomless universe
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge
curious,
And for love, sweet love—but praise! praise! praise
For the sure enwinding arms of cool, enfolding
Death.
Dark Mother, always gliding near with soft feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest wel-
come?

Then I chant for thee, I glorify thee above all,
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed
 come, come unflinching,
Approach, strong deliveress,
When it is so, when thou hast taken them
I joyously sing the dead,
Lost in the loving, floating ocean of thee,
Laved in the flood of thy bliss, O Death.
From me to thee glad serenades,
Dances for thee I propose, saluting thee, adorn-
 ments and feastings for thee,
And the sights of the open landscape and the high-
 spread sky are fitting,
And life and the fields, and the huge and thought-
 ful night,
The night in silence under many a star,
The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave
 whose voice I know,
And the soul turning to thee, O vast and well
 veil'd Death,
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee,
Over the tree tops I float thee a song,
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad
 fields and the prairies wide,
Over the dense-packed cities all, and the teeming
 wharves, and ways,
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee, O
 Death.

Whitman in his wheel chair, physically shattered and broken, but with a mind strong and serene, and at peace with all the world, waiting for the sun to set, is a lesson in optimism better than all the sermons ever preached. Without faith in any form of religion that the world has ever known, he had brought his life so in harmony with nature that he felt every beat of the great, universal heart, and with the confidence of certain knowledge he looked upon the fading earth and caroled a song as he sailed forth on that great unknown

sea, which is hidden in perpetual night, from all but the few great souls, whose wisdom and insight have given them the confidence and trust of a little child.

Joy, shipmates, joy!
(Pleas'd to my soul at death I cry,)
Our life is closed, our life begins,
The long, long anchorage we leave,
The ship is clear at last, she leaps!
She swiftly courses from the shore,
Joy, shipmates, joy.

Conscious of the integrity of his purpose, and the inherent righteousness of his life, moved and upheld by his broad philosophy and his patient, trustful soul, with no false modesty and with the same manly egoism that made him what he was—the kindest, gentlest, justest, broadest, manliest man—Walt Whitman asked the reward his life had earned.

Give me the pay I have served for,
Give me to sing the song of the great Idea, take
all the rest,
I have loved the earth, sun, animals, I have despised
riches,
I have given alms to every one that ask'd, stood
up for the stupid and crazy, devoted my income
and labor to others,
Hated tyrants, argued not concerning God, had
patience and indulgence toward people, taken
off my hat to nothing known or unknown,
Gone freely with powerful uneducated persons and
with the young, and with the mothers of fam-
ilies,
Read these leaves to myself in the open air, tried
them by trees, stars, rivers,
Dismiss'd whatever insulted my own soul or de-
filed my body,

Claim'd nothing to myself which I have not carefully claim'd for others on the same terms,
 Sped to the camps, and comrades found and accepted from every State,
 (Upon this breast has many a dying soldier lean'd to breathe his last,
 This arm, this hand, this voice, have nourish'd, rais'd, restor'd,
 To life recalling many a prostrate form;) I am willing to wait to be understood by the growth of the taste of myself,
 Rejecting none, permitting all.

When man has grown simpler and saner and truer—when the fever of civilization has been subdued and the pestilence been cured; when man shall no longer deny and revile the universal mother who gave him birth, then Walt Whitman's day will come. In the clear light of that regenerated time, when the world looks back to the doubt and mist and confusion of today, Walt Whitman will stand alone, the greatest, truest, noblest prophet of the age, a man untainted by artificial life and unmoved by the false standards of his time. In a sodden, commercial, money-getting age, he enjoyed all the beauty of the earth without the vulgar lust to own. In a world of privilege and caste, he felt and taught the brotherhood of man and the kinship of all living things. In an age of false modesty and perverted thought, he sang the sanctity of the body with the divinity of the soul. Against the agnostic and the Christian too, he defended every part and portion

of the faultless work of the creative power. Above the doleful, doubting voice of men, through the dreariest day and darkest night, in the raging of the storm and the madness of the waves, his strong, optimistic, reassuring note was ever heard above the rest, proclaiming to the universe that all is well. He saw that in a wise economy and a great broad way, that the false was true, the evil good, the wrong was right, and that over all the universe, pervading all its teeming life, a power omnipotent, beneficent and wise, was working to uplift, conserve and purify the whole. The poor, the weak, the suffering, the outcast, the felon, all knew him for their comrade and their friend. His great, inclusive, universal heart left no soul outside, but all alike he knew, the life of all he felt, and one and all he loved. In his vocabulary were no words of bitterness and hate, and in his philosophy no right to censure or to blame. In his every deed and thought he seemed to say:

“So I be written in the book of love,
I have no care about that book above,
Ease my name, or write it as you please,
So I be written in the book of love.”

As the shadows lengthen and the daylight wanes—as the hair whitens and the passions cool, more and more do we learn that love is

the true philosophy of life; more and more do we revise the sterner judgments of our earlier years; more and more do we see that pity should take the place of blame, forgiveness of punishment, charity of justice, and hatred be replaced by love. When old familiar faces awake the memories of bygone days, often and often again do we fear that our judgments were cruel and unjust, but every deed of mercy and every act of charity and every thought of pity is like the balm of Gilead to our souls. We may none of us be wise or great, fortune may elude us and fame may never come; but however poor or weak or humble, we yet may inscribe our names in the fairest, brightest book,—the book of love, and on its sacred pages, earned by the glorious truths he taught, by his infinite, ever present love of all, upon the foremost line will be inscribed Walt Whitman's name.

JOHN P. ALTGELD

Address of Clarence Darrow, at the Funeral
Friday, March 14, 1902.

In the great flood of human life that is spawned upon the earth, it is not often that a man is born. The friend and comrade that we mourn today was formed of that infinitely rare mixture that now and then at long, long intervals combines to make a man. John P. Altgeld was one of the rarest souls who ever lived and died. His was a humble birth, a fearless life and a dramatic, fitting death. We who knew him, we who loved him, we who rallied to his many hopeless calls, we who dared to praise him while his heart still beat, can not yet feel that we shall never hear his voice again.

John P. Altgeld was a soldier tried and true; not a soldier clad in uniform, decked with spangles and led by fife and drum in the mad intoxication of the battlefield; such soldiers have not been rare upon the earth in any land or age. John P. Altgeld was a soldier in the everlasting struggle of the human race for liberty and justice on the earth. From the first awakening of his young mind until the last relentless summons came, he was a soldier

who had no rest or furlough, who was ever on the field in the forefront of the deadliest and most hopeless fight, whom none but death could muster out. Liberty, the relentless goddess, had turned her fateful smile on John P. Altgeld's face when he was but a child, and to this first, fond love he was faithful unto death.

Liberty is the most jealous and exacting mistress that can beguile the brain and soul of man. She will have nothing from him who will not give her all. She knows that his pretended love serves but to betray. But when once the fierce heat of her quenchless, lustrous eyes has burned into the victim's heart, he will know no other smile but hers. Liberty will have none but the great devoted souls, and by her glorious visions, her lavish promises, her boundless hopes, her infinitely witching charms, she lures her victims over hard and stony ways, by desolate and dangerous paths, through misery, obloquy and want to a martyr's cruel death. Today we pay our last sad homage to the most devoted lover, the most abject slave, the fondest, wildest, dreamiest victim that ever gave his life to liberty's immortal cause.

In the history of the country where he lived and died, the life and works of our devoted

dead will one day shine in words of everlasting light. When the bitter feelings of the hour have passed away, when the mad and poisonous fever of commercialism shall have run its course, when conscience and honor and justice and liberty shall once more ascend the throne from which the shameless, brazen goddess of power and wealth have driven her away; then this man we knew and loved will find his rightful place in the minds and hearts of the cruel, unwilling world he served. No purer patriot ever lived than the friend we lay at rest today. His love of country was not paraded in the public marts, or bartered in the stalls for gold; his patriotism was of that pure ideal mold that placed love of man above the love of self.

John P. Altgeld was always and at all times a lover of his fellow man. Those who reviled him have tried to teach the world that he was bitter and relentless, that he hated more than loved. We who knew the man, we who clasped his hand and heard his voice and looked into his smiling face; we who knew his life of kindness, of charity, of infinite pity to the outcast and the weak; we who knew his human heart, could never be deceived. A truer, greater, gentler, kindlier soul has never lived and died; and the fierce bitterness and hatred that sought to destroy this great, grand soul had but one

cause—the fact that he really loved his fellow man.

As a youth our dead chieftain risked his life for the cause of the black man, whom he always loved. As a lawyer he was wise and learned; impatient with the forms and machinery which courts and legislators and lawyers have woven to strangle justice through expense and ceremony and delay; as a judge he found a legal way to do what seemed right to him, and if he could not find a legal way, he found a way. As a Governor of a great State, he ruled wisely and well. Elected by the greatest personal triumph of any Governor ever chosen by the State, he fearlessly and knowingly bared his devoted head to the fiercest, most vindictive criticism ever heaped upon a public man, because he loved justice and dared to do the right

In the days now past, John P. Altgeld, our loving chief, in scorn and derision was called John Pardon Altgeld by those who would destroy his power. We who stand today around his bier and mourn the brave and loving friend are glad to adopt this name. If, in the infinite economy of nature, there shall be another land where crooked paths shall be made straight, where heaven's justice shall review the judg-

ments of the earth—if there shall be a great, wise, humane judge, before whom the sons of men shall come, we can hope for nothing better for ourselves than to pass into that infinite presence as the comrades and friends of John Pardon Altgeld, who opened the prison doors and set the captive free.

Even admirers have seldom understood the real character of this great human man. These were sometimes wont to feel that the fierce bitterness of the world that assailed him fell on deaf ears and an unresponsive soul. They did not know the man, and they do not feel the subtleties of human life. It was not a callous heart that so often led him to brave the most violent and malicious hate; it was not a callous heart, it was a devoted soul. He so loved justice and truth and liberty and righteousness that all the terrors that the earth could hold were less than the condemnation of his own conscience for an act that was cowardly or mean.

John P. Altgeld, like many of the earth's great souls, was a solitary man. Life to him was serious and earnest—an endless tragedy. The earth was a great hospital of sick, wounded and suffering, and he a devoted surgeon, who had no right to waste one moment's time and

whose duty was to cure them all. While he loved his friends, he yet could work without them, he could live without them, he could bid them one by one good-bye, when their courage failed to follow where he led; and he could go alone, out into the silent night, and, looking upward at the changeless stars, could find communion there.

My dear, dead friend, long and well have we known you, devotedly have we followed you, implicitly have we trusted you, fondly have we loved you. Beside your bier we now must say farewell. The heartless call has come, and we must stagger on the best we can alone. In the darkest hours we will look in vain for your loved form, we will listen hopelessly for your devoted, fearless voice. But, though we lay you in the grave and hide you from the sight of man, your brave words will speak for the poor, the oppressed, the captive and the weak; and your devoted life inspire countless souls to do and dare in the holy cause for which you lived and died.

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